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HAITI

SUCCESS STORY

Better Prospects for Out-of-School Youth

Education, vocational training, and internships prepare youth for jobs

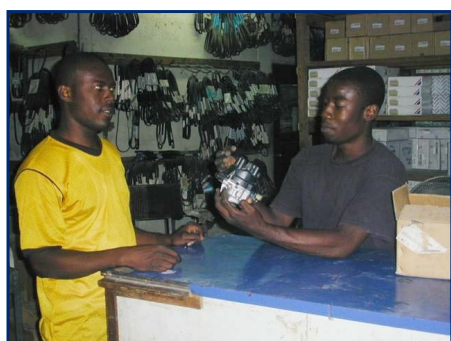


Photo: USAID/Haiti

Jefferson St. Louis takes care of a customer at Universal Motors, which hired him after he graduated from a USAID-funded job skills training program for illiterate and unemployed youth in Haiti.

“This program has already started to change my life. It has allowed me to quickly gain skills that would have taken years to acquire. Now I feel like a brand new person” said Jefferson St. Louis, who graduated from a USAID-funded job training program.

Twenty-year-old Jefferson St. Louis from Carrefour-Feuilles, one of Port-au-Prince’s largest slums, comes from a family of six. Poverty forced Jefferson to drop out of school before age 10. Like most Haitian youth, he wanted an opportunity to learn a skill and provide for his family.

The poor quality of education and a lack of finances to pay school fees have left an estimated 500,000 youth out of school and on the streets in Haiti. Most have never attended primary school or have dropped out before grade three.

When Jefferson heard of a USAID program that provides illiterate and unemployed youth ages 15-24 with education and job training, he immediately realized that this was the opportunity he had been seeking.

“This program has opened a door for me and for all Haitian youth seeking a better future who are willing to be productive citizens in tomorrow’s world,” he said.

Jefferson completed 18 months of training — 12 months of integrated basic academic and vocational training, and a six-month internship with a skills center that offers training in auto mechanics and sewing to out-of-school youth. He earned a certificate in auto mechanics and is now employed by one of Haiti’s most prestigious car dealerships, Universal Motors.

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The USAID workforce program began with a pilot phase of 450 students in 2003. Now, more than 5,000 students are enrolled in training centers throughout Haiti.